

## FUELING THE COOKING (speech 4 – How To Say It)

### INTRODUCTION

I'd like to ask the audience. Are there mothers here? Anybody else here cooks? Those who consider the kitchen their domain? Well, I don't cook. But for those of us who do cook, or for those who are attuned to cooking fuel prices, we complain on how fuel prices have **gone up** in recent years. I mean, **how much** does an LPG tank cost nowadays? Anybody know? In today's spiraling cost of cooking fuel prices, we just have to become creative and resourceful. What I'll be sharing with you will most **definitely** interest you. I will tell you how our household was able to **cut** cooking fuel expenses by at least 50% last year.

### AT THE MALL

In January 2005, my wife and I were walking around inside a nearby mall. This particular mall had an exhibit area in one of its floors. Occasionally, this mall would have booths showcasing products from the different regions in the country. All of the booths would sell different wares that generally come from the featured region. At that particular week when we were strolling, the featured region was Region II, in particular, La Union, a province up north. So, there were the usual predictable products like **native** carvings, **woven** blankets, **native** delicacies like "tupig" and "patupat", as well as bagoong products and the like. Walking around, we noticed **one** booth where there was group of people **milling** around. Some were gawking at an object. I said to myself "maybe there's something interesting inside". Now this particular booth wasn't any bigger than the rest. From a **distance**, it looked ordinary. Then I looked up and read the booth's name. It said **NA-TO-MO**. Sounds Japanese. It must be a Japanese enterprise. But out from La Union? Okay, I said "this I have to see". Craning my neck and peeking inside, I didn't see any Japanese-looking people inside. No, those inside the booth were your typical Ilocano-looking "manongs" – hardy and with dark complexion.

### THE STOVE

And what were the people looking at? Getting **closer**, I saw something that resembled a funny-looking stove. Made of cast iron – aluminum alloy, it had 4 legs and a tall chimney. The stove was probably **this high** and the chimney was **this tall**. I asked for the manong's name and he said Nato. I didn't get his full name. Donato? Fortunato? Renato? Just Nato. And the booth's name is Natomo. How clever. I learned from Nato that the stove will take virtually **anything** for fuel. And that means old newspapers, paper trash, dried leaves, agricultural wastes like rice husks, coconut shells, corn cobs, corn husks, virtually any trash that burns. The displayed stove had a cover on **top** and on the **front**. And they were closed. Then I asked Nato for a demo to make the stove work. He said, "it's already working, the stove has burning fuel inside". I was incredulous! How can that be? How can a first-class, fully air-conditioned mall allow a cooker with burning fuel inside. Nato opened the front cover there was a bright, **intense** red-orange glow coming from the inside of the stove. Yes, the stove was burning fuel alright and the heat was just too much so he closed it. I looked **up** the stove's chimney and there was no smoke. If there was, then it was hardly visible. No wonder the mall allowed this stove to operate. There was no obnoxious smoke to annoy the mall shoppers. What a piece of Pinoy ingenuity and it was aptly named by Natomo as the SuperKalan or the SuperStove. We were sold and bought a unit.

### AT HOME

At home, it was easy to assemble the unit. Now, we cook as much as we can with the stove practically the whole day during weekends. Some of the cooked food, we store in the ref. But we still use the LPG on the regular stove occasionally and sparingly. Have we saved with this superstove? You **bet**! Whereas an LPG tank in the past lasted one and a half months, now it lasts **3 months** or more. So that has **cut** our LPG usage by 50% at least. Is the superstove truly smokeless? Well, we discovered that when starting a fire, there will be smoke. But once you get that intense, red-orange smoldering embers and use very dry fuel, then it becomes smokeless. We learned that the more moisture content your fuel has, the more smoke you will have. Then there are the side benefits. We **positioned** the superstove right under our mango tree in our front yard. The smoke that does come out of the chimney gets rid of the mosquitoes, insects and pests that dwell in the tree thus assuring us of plenty, big, green and yellow mango fruits. But the best part of all is we don't spend anything for the superstove's fuel, not even for charcoal, because we don't use it. You know why? Well, we just look around the neighborhood and we see many sources of free fuel: **discarded lumber** from a nearby construction site, **fallen** branches, **branches** that have been trimmed from trees, **rolled-up** old newspapers. The list is practically **endless**.

### CONCLUSION

So you see, there are some creative ways where you might just be able to beat today's spiralling cooking fuel prices. Now, there's a concept fast becoming popular and it's about a stove made from softdrink cans with denatured alcohol as its fuel. I've not tried it yet, but if I do, who knows, I may just **get rid** of the LPG tank altogether.